



## Clearing Debris from Land



You are responsible for clearing debris from your own property.

### Determine Priorities

After a severe storm, priorities for clearing debris from land should be determined by:

- Land use and value—Clear streets and roads to allow emergency vehicles to pass freely. In pastures, remove any lumber containing nails or other pieces of metal that could injure livestock.
- Equipment available—Power saws, tractors, bulldozers, and trucks can be used to move fallen trees. If you have access to small equipment only, remove tree roots and small limbs before attempting to clear the area.
- Type of debris—Different vegetation requires different clean-up and salvage procedures. In woodlots and forests experienced foresters should designate salvageable timber. Specialized equipment may be needed to clear large areas efficiently.

### Remove Debris

Several methods may be used to remove tree debris:

#### Bulldozing

- Inspect damaged trees to see if they can be salvaged. Contact an Extension horticulturist or forestry specialist for this work.
- Remove valuable trees before clearing debris.
- If possible, attach a rake to the front of the bulldozer. This will allow most of the soil to pass through the teeth, eliminating undesirable mounds of soil.
- Remove the stumps. If bulldozers will be used, leave stumps 6 to 10 feet high for leverage. If a stump grinder will be used remove the trees at ground level.

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*Document DH-071,*  
*IFAS Disaster Handbook for*  
*Extension Agents* (developed  
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Service for the benefit of  
Florida's citizens)

## Burial

Tree debris can be buried, but the cost is high. Use a chipping machine to eliminate smaller branches and reduce the amount of burial space needed.

## Landfill

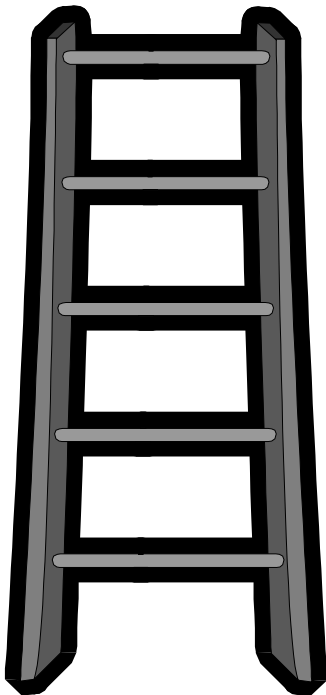
Tree debris can be placed in erosion gullies (where the land is not practical for terracing) or in swamps or low-lying areas. Consult a water resource specialist to determine how the landfill will alter the water's path. You will need a bulldozer or other large equipment for this work. It is dangerous to use a tractor to push debris into gullies.

## Burning

Let trees dry until foliage begins to fall. Put debris in large compact piles and cover with fuel oil. Stoke piles and keep fire alive until all woody material is burned. In some areas you may need a permit to burn debris. Burning may be prohibited in some communities because of smoke pollution.

## Safety

If you are unaccustomed to working with damaged or fallen timber, observe safety precautions to prevent injury or death.



- Stabilize ladders when pruning trees, or climb into trees to prune. Use a safety rope.
- Watch for falling limbs.
- Be careful of electric power lines. Leave extensive pruning around power lines to power companies. Wet limbs or dirt- or soil-soaked control ropes on pruning equipment can be hazardous. Do not use pruning equipment with metal handles.
- Observe safety precautions with chain saws. Use a sharp saw. Shut off motor, even when you are moving only a few feet. Remember that you can't shout or hear warnings when the saw is running.
- Clear the area before beginning to saw limbs or trees. Determine the direction the tree will fall. Do not allow trees to fall into other tree branches. Plan an escape route in case the tree jumps off the stump when it is cut.